

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 7825

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, UK, US, XO, IN

SUBJECT: JOURNALISTS TO DIEGO GARCIA

REF: (A) STATE 120962; (B) STATE 100897; (C) NEW DELHI 8733
OF JULY 27, 1973

1. SINCE WE WERE PROBABLY THE VILLAINS WHO RAISED THE QUESTION
OF INVITING THIRD-COUNTRY NEWSPAPERMEN TO VISIT DIEGO GARCIA IF
AND WHEN AMERICAN AND BRITISH CORRESPONDENTS WERE TAKEN TO THAT
CONTROVERSIAL CITADEL, WE SHOULD PERHAPS ADD ONE OR TWO BRIEF
COMMENTS TO THIS LONG DEBATE.

2. FIRST, WE ARE NOT ENTHUSIASTS FOR ANY JOURNALISTIC FORAYS TO
DIEGO GARCIA AND THUS JOIN VIRTUALLY ALL OF OUR INDIAN OCEAN
COLLEAGUES IN WISHING THE PRESS VISIT COULD BE PUT OFF INDE-
FINITELY.

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3. SECOND, OUR ORIGINAL SUGGESTION (REF C) WAS THAT ONE OR TWO LITTORAL STATE CORRESPONDENTS BE INVITED ALONG TO OFFSET WHAT WE FELT WOULD BE THE IMPRESSION THAT US US AND UK WERE PUTTING OUT CANNED MATERIAL FOR PICKED US AND BRITISH NEWSMEN. THE NEWS STORIES WOULD GET WIDE PUBLICITY BUT MINIMAL CREDIBILITY WITHIN THE REGION, PARTICULARLY IF THEY WERE RELAXED AND BLAND. OUR THOUGHT WAS THAT WE WOULD PICK AND CHOOSE THE ADDITIONAL NEWSMEN FOR RELIABILITY AND OBJECTIVITY AND THEREBY AT LEAST PRETEND TO SOME FORM OF OPEN-HANDED TREATMENT OF NEWSMEN VISITS TO THE ISLAND. IT MAY BE THERE ARE O SUCH NEWSMEN IN THIS AREA. MOST OF THE COMMENTING MISSIONS SEEMED TO DOUBT THERE WERE ANY AROUND THEIR PARISHES. WE FELT WE COULD MAKE A CASE THAT WE WEREN'T INVITING EVERYONE BECAUSE THERE WERE ONLY A BARE HANDFUL OF EVEN US AND UK NEWSMEN ALONG, AND WE SIMPLY WERE NOT ABLE TO MAKE IT A FREE JUNKET FOR THE JOURNALISTIC PROFESSION OF THE REGION.

4. THIRD, WE DID NOT THINK THAT BY THIS TACTIC WE WOULD FORECLOSE CRITICAL COMMENTS ON THE ISLAND OR ON US PURPOSES. THERE'S NO WAY OF DOING THAT. BUT WE DID THINK WE MIGHT EASE THE CREDIBILITY PROBLEM OF WHAT IS ON THE ISLAND. WE STILL THINK THAT'S RIGHT. BUT WE'RE NOT WEDDED TO THE WHOLE NOTION AND IF, IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, THE DEPARTMENT AND DOD DECIDE TO GO AHEAD WITH JUST AMERICANS AND BRITISH OR--BEST OF ALL--DROP THE ENTIRE IDEA OF A VISIT, THIS MISSION WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED. MOYNIHAN

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